

*In Memoriam*

JOHN KELLER

Emeritus Prelate

St. Mary's Commandery, No. 36, H. T.



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**EULOGIES**

**on the**

**Death**

**of**

**Eminent Sir John Keller**

**Emeritus Prelate**

# MASONIC HISTORY.

## **Eminent Sir John Keller.**

Knighthood March 10th, 1870.

Passed away December 22d, 1902.

Eminent Commander, 1883.

Prelate, 1886 to 1902.

Emeritus Prelate, from May, 1902, to date of death.

Past Master of Washington Lodge, No. 59.

Past High Priest of Harmony Chapter, No. 52.

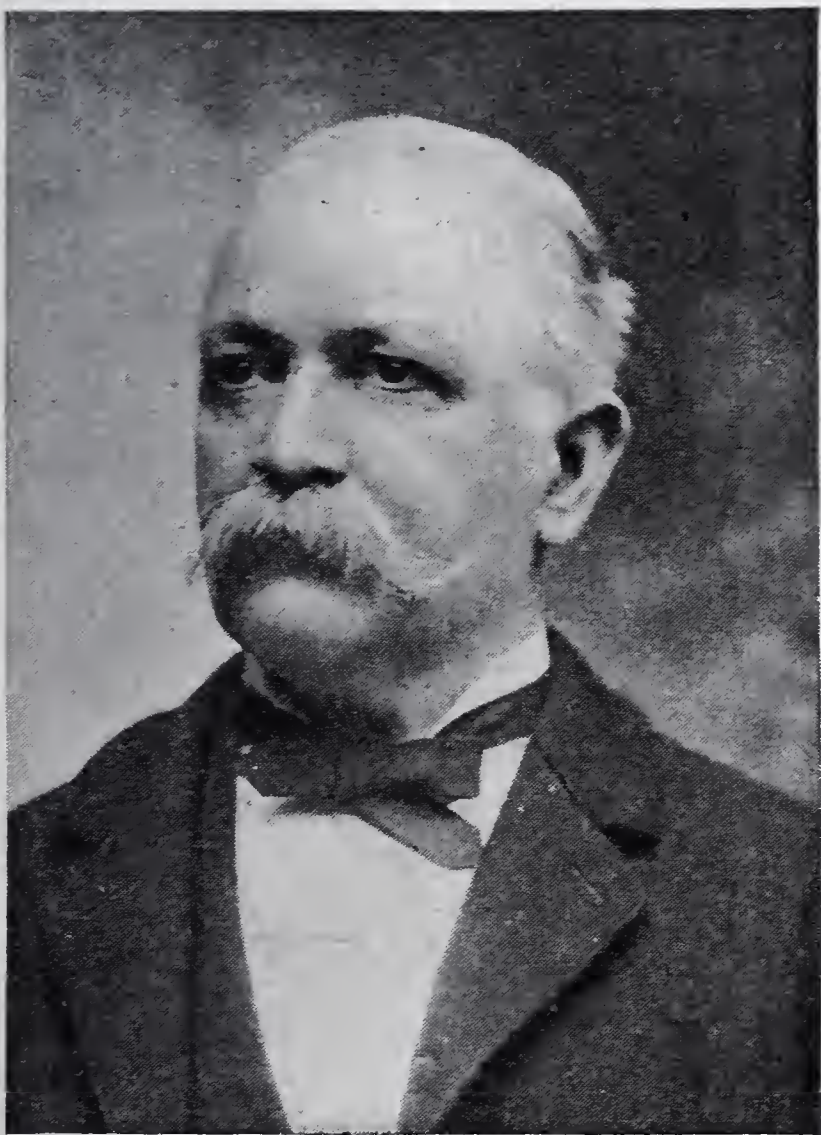
Actively engaged in the affairs of the A. A. S. R., and elected to the thirty-third degree in the same.

A member of the Masonic Veterans of Pennsylvania.

During his active Masonic life he occupied many positions of trust and honor in the Fraternity. For many years Treasurer of Lodge No. 59, and representing that body in the Stewards of the Girard Charity Fund, and also one of the Bursars of the Thomas R. Patton Fund.

He is not dead, and has but passed  
Beyond the mist that blinds us here  
Into the new and holier life  
Of that eternal sphere.

He has dropped his robe of clay  
To put that brighter raiment on;  
He has not wandered far away,  
For none are lost or gone.



**Eminent Sir John Keller.**





REMARKS BY  
EMINENT SIR WILLIAM J. KELLY.

EMINENT COMMANDER.

In due course of mail I received from you a letter dated December 26th, containing a request that I should prepare an eulogy on the life and services of our friend and frater, JOHN KELLER, and in that I note the suggestion you make of my being one of his warmest friends. This is eminently true and is a matter of great gratification to me that you recognize the fact. It has always been a matter of pleasure and pride to me that during the whole period of our acquaintance and friendship there was never one single word, look or act that would have any tendency to mar the pleasure of our friendship or cast a doubt upon our sincerity.

On the 10th of April, 1860, I visited the Masonic Hall on Chestnut Street and was directed into the lobby where I found our able and honored Grand Tyler, Wm. B. Schneider, for the moment performing his duty tyling Lodges. No one else was present. With his unerring instinct and knowledge of faces, he recognized me as a stranger and naturally asked my business. I told him that I was instructed to be present to learn my fate, which was pending in Washington Lodge, No. 59. He courteously and kindly asked me to be seated and that no doubt in a short time I would be called for. Presently a form appeared; he was slight in build, modest, retiring and diffident to a degree, apparently afraid to come a step farther into the lobby, but the same Grand Old Tyler,

seeing that he was also seeking light, approached him and finding that his errand was of the same character as my own, brought him forward to where I sat and jokingly said that now there was a pair of us who would be on the anxious stool for a short time. The second of the pair was JOHN KELLER. In the natural nervousness of our positions, with our hopes yet unrealized, we sat together and talked more like old friends than new acquaintances. Very soon there appeared a tall pleasant gentleman, who calling our names announced that we had been approved in that Lodge and that we were then ready for initiation. We were initiated on the same night, passed one month following, raised again the same night one month later and were then full-fledged members of Lodge No. 59.

The Masonic history of JOHN KELLER has been a notable one from the fact that he has been continuously busy and useful in his Lodge, holding all subordinate positions, finally to be elected Worshipful Master and then Treasurer, which he held until a couple of years ago and then relinquished it by declining re-election. In his Chapter, which he entered in 1867, he served in various capacities almost continuously until 1896. In this Commandary, which he joined in 1870, we need hardly refer to his various positions except to say that he served as Junior Warden in 1879-80; Captain-General in 1881; Generalissimo in 1882; Eminent Commander in 1883. He was appointed Prelate in 1886, served until 1901, when, owing to his health having become strained to the utmost he relinquished the active duties of that position and was appointed Emeritus and was continued such until his death. He was a member of the Masonic



Veterans, in which he felt great interest, and as that is an organization that was conceived for the purpose of meeting with the elder members of the fraternity and contributing to their amusement and happiness, he was active and continued to do his share towards their entertainment until his health failed him. In the A. & A. Rite, which he joined 1874, he never held any elective offices in either of the four bodies of which he was a member, yet he was one of the most zealous and active members they had. He was also Grand Orator for many years. This, in brief, is his active work in the Masonic fraternity.

As a man, a citizen, an all-around member of the community, he sized up beyond the full average in his usefulness and influence among his fellow men. He had an unquestioned faith in Almighty God and a full belief in the accountability in another world for acts done in this. He shrank from all ostentation in respect of his religion and rarely spoke of it, but when he did so it was always with an earnest and perfectly simple reverence. He was utterly free from anything like intolerance and had a deep aversion to disputatiousness about matters in which religion was concerned. His sentiment seemed to me to be, give me a gentle, humble lover of God and man, a man full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy, a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope and labor of love, and his actions said, let my soul be with these Christians wheresoever they are and whatsoever opinions they are of. He was simple and inexpensive in his habits and dressed with unvarying plainness. He was habitually grave in demeanor. He did not often laugh and had but a

small appreciation of humor. He sometimes told a story but rarely without spoiling it. He was pure in speech and thought; ribaldry in word and manner were alike hateful to him, and men felt this instinctively and rarely offended in this respect in his presence. Modesty was a conspicuous element in his character. There was no subject upon which he talked less than himself. He rarely or never referred to himself or his history. There have been few men with so much to remember, so little given to reminiscence. Not only would he seldom volunteer recollections, but it required skill even to draw them from him. His modesty as to the accuracy of his judgment led him always to speak carefully and with provisos where men of less intellectual weight would become dogmatic. He had none of that pretentiousness which claims all knowledge as its own. Even when questioned on subjects which he would be expected to be familiar, his plain answer was again and again, "I don't know." But this frank "I don't know" was largely due also to a scrupulous adherence to truth even in trifles. He did not equivocate in the commonest equivocations. His aim was to know he was right and do it. To a love of truth he joined a love of justice. He had a swift and towering temper, but also a constant watchfulness and repression. He was an indomitable laborer. He allowed himself no rest while any matter was pending that required attention and when it passed out of his care as finished it was generally so well done as not to require revision. His political opinions were founded on the belief that they were a sentiment which could not be appalled, corrupted or compromised. It knew no baseness, it cowered to no danger; fear-



less, generous and humane, it rebuked the arrogant and sympathized with the humble. It asked nothing but what it conceded and it conceded nothing but what it demanded.

He was for many years a salesman with the firm of Hunt, Wilkinson & Co., furniture dealers of this city. With them he was earnest, attentive and skillful. I had the pleasure of assisting in giving him an opportunity of demonstrating in this Temple the scope of his taste in decoration and ability in the general arrangement of a suite of rooms. The result of that arrangement was the general rehabilitation of the Grand Master's reception room, general office and private office in this Temple, and I would earnestly commend an examination of these rooms to the members of this Commandery, showing the extreme good taste, not only in the painted decoration of the walls but also in the general arrangement of the wood work, lighting and furnishing of these rooms. I found in my business relations with him to be entirely conscientious in endeavoring to get the work done precisely in accordance with intimations held out to me before receiving the order, and my confidence in him can be appreciated when I say to you that the transaction which involved several thousand dollars was done upon the word of Brother KELLER and not one single word of written contract passed between us. He continued in the employ of this firm until the great fire which occurred October 25, 1901, resulting in the loss of twenty-two lives, and while he was still a short time longer in their employ we, who know him, could see that the effect of that fire and the loss of lives had utterly destroyed his nervous system, leaving him a wreck, struggling

manfully to recuperate, but his high sense of humanity was such that the picture of the suffering that he was an eye witness to, was too much for him, and finally, after a prolonged struggle, he died on the 20th of December, 1902, and when the sod covers him in his last resting place, it shuts out for all time from our vision and association one of the most upright, generous and honorable men that we ever had among us.

I beg to offer the following resolution :

“ *Resolved*, That in the death of our distinguished and beloved Frater Sir JOHN KELLER, Mary Commandery, No. 36, K. T., mourns with his family and friends in our great loss, being measurably consoled, however, in the knowledge that his correct life gives promise of reward to him in the *long long* future in his new home.



## REMARKS BY

EMINENT SIR WILLIAM H. BURKHARDT.

EMINENT COMMANDER AND SIR KNIGHTS.

It was my privilege to speak to you at the last meeting in respect to our deceased frater JOHN KELLER. I then said that I felt quite sure that you would never see him in the Commandery again, and that you would never again hear his voice. I suggested that you call upon him that he might see and hear you. I little thought at that time that your opportunities for doing this would be so limited, or that he should so soon pass away. The Angel of Death, of whom he so often spoke in his position as Prelate, received the fatal mandate to strike him from the roll of human existence much sooner than I had expected.

It has been my privilege to speak of Sir KELLER in other bodies meeting in the Temple in which we were fellow members. I have said of him that he was a manly man, a faithful man, an honest man, but to night I am especially privileged to speak of him as a Christian. Sir KELLER was a communicant member of Christ P. E. Church, and was faithful to his vows of confirmation.

Nature had endowed him with an excellent voice which he delighted to make use of in singing the praises of his Lord and Master. For some time he was the Choir master of an Episcopal church, giving a great deal of time and attention to the instruction of those under his care. He also sang for some time the tenor part in an Episcopal choir. His tastes and inclinations were of a religious

character and he was therefore well fitted to occupy the position of Prelate.

No one, perhaps, was known to more members of our Commandery than Sir KELLER. He has performed the duties of appointed positions, was elected Captain-General, Generalissimo and Eminent Commander successively, which positions he filled with great credit. Scarcely had his term of office expired as Eminent Commander when he was invited to fill the position of Prelate and continued to perform the duties of that office until failing health compelled him to retire. During the many years of his performance of the duties of Prelate he came face to face with hundreds of those on whom was conferred the Order of the Temple, and no one of these can ever forget the deep and solemn impressiveness of his delivery of that portion of the ritual that it was his duty to render. He entered into the spirit of these lessons and his mind was imbued with their great importance and the solemn impression intended to be conveyed to those to whom they were given.

In connection with the musical services of his church he had learned to sing the Jubilate, the Invitatory, the Gloria Patri, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Magnificat, Nunc Demitis, the Te Deum and the Psalms of David. He has carried these with him to his celestial abode, where he will form a part of that multitude which no man number, who surround the Throne in Heaven, singing Blessing and Honor, Glory and Power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.



REMARKS BY  
EMINENT SIR WILLIAM B. SMITH.

EMINENT SIR AND FRATERS.

A due conception of the high standard which animates the membership of this great Commandery, and a most accute appreciation of the honored position you hold in the same, gives me some diffidence in addressing you, especially after listening to the able and kindly eulogy of our distinguished frater Past Commander William J. Kelly, conspicuous for the able, concise and above all, Knightly Memorial upon our late and deep lamented associate Past Commander JOHN KELLER, whose virtues, modesty, manhood and sweet character rendered him one who would be an ornament to any organization and especially worthy of the honor, pride, and esteem of Mary Commandery.

It was my honor and privilege to have known JOHN KELLER for more than forty years, prior to his having become a Mason, and long before I could even hope to aspire to such a precious privilege, even then as a man he was a personal exemplification of those qualifications of mind, character and deportment which could not fail to make his record in the fraternity one worthy of emulation, and a credit to any body to which he should become attached.

I was, unfortunately, an eye witness of that dreadful scene of devastation and horror, when our dear brother, with a heart too weak for such anguish, and a brain almost crazed by the terrible deaths which came to so many poor helpless

creatures in his presence, and knowing his nature we can well understand how he never again was the same man after the fearful ordeal through which he passed.

Whilst I am exceedingly careful never to analyze or set a standard upon the Christian actions of any man, being fully conscious of the frailties of human life, I am nevertheless always proud to evince an appreciation of such a glorious heritage as was so peculiarly and truly typical of our late lamented frater and most distinguished and accomplished Prelate.

How fitting and appropriate it seems that Past Commander Kelly, the first to meet with Brother KELLER as a Mason, should, after such a long, intimate and immediate relationship with him in all the duties and offices of Lodge, Chapter and Commandery, be delegated to pay his sweet tribute to the memory of his warm friend and departed brother.

The beautiful and impressive address of our dignified Sir Knight and Christian gentleman, Eminent Sir William H. Burkhardt, so pure in its diction and sacred in its religious thoughts, are like "pearls of great value," and he is indeed honored, who justly merits and receives such encomiums as have been bestowed in these beautiful and sincere addresses.

And now at the close of his bright and shining life, filled with works of love, charity and fraternity, I would feel that I were untrue to myself and to the memory of our departed frater, whose companionship, support and advice I shared in the years when I held the honored chairs now so acceptably filled by the present most excellent and representative incumbents, unless I paid my humble



tribute to his manhood and worth, and in all tenderness, with sweet loving memories, I lay my humble wreath of green leaves on his grave and say with a sorrowful heart—

Friend, Brother, Knight, farewell, peace to thy memory.

REMARKS BY  
SIR CHARLES H. ROBERTS.

“What has been said with reference to Sir JOHN KELLER has been truthfully and beautifully said. My acquaintance with him dated back several years, prior to my becoming a member of this Commandery. My first impressions of him were most pleasant and lasting, and these impressions continued to increase, as I witnessed his excellent work as rendered in the Red Cross and Temple Degrees. Oft have we heard from his lips, “In the midst of life we are in death.” How truthfully but painfully is this statement being daily verified. When I accepted the appointment as Prelate, it was with the hope that Sir KELLER would be restored to health, and able to resume his position ; but alas he has gone.

“ Out of the shadowland, into the sunshine ;  
Cloudless, eternal, that fades not away.  
Softly, tenderly, the Master called him—*Home*,  
Where the ransomed are gathering to-day.”



